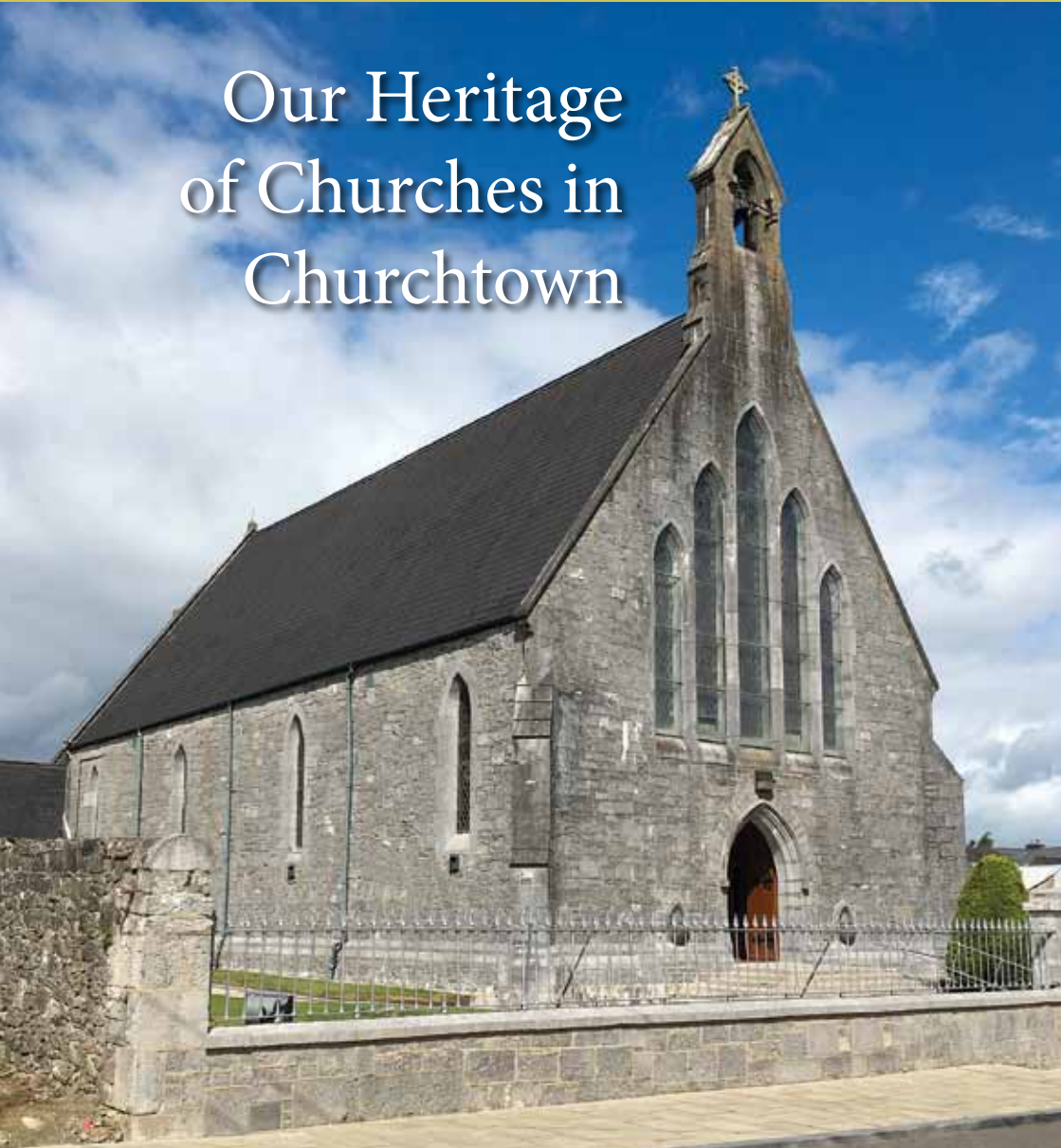


Our Heritage of Churches in Churchtown



Churchtown Heritage Society is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of Churchtown





*Above top: view of the church from the gallery and, below, view towards the entrance.
Front cover: St Nicholas' Church which was completed in the 1860s.*

A long history

Our recorded Church history in Churchtown goes back almost a thousand years and gives the village its name. For instance we know from Rotulus Pipae Clonensis or the *Pipe Roll of Cloyne* that in 1291 the village was described as '*Bruhenny alias Baile an Teampaill alias Churchtown*'. Bruhenny is the Anglicised version of the Irish name Brugh Thuinne which literally translated means the 'big house' (brugh) of the 'pasture land' (Thuinne being the genitive case of Tonn or pastureland).

In 1291 Bruhenny Church was Roman Catholic. This was 250 years before the Reformation took hold in Ireland and the establishment of the Church of Ireland. It would have been in the very late 1500s that Bruhenny Church became a place of worship for Church of Ireland parishioners. Some of the remains of Bruhenny Church still exist and the adjoining graveyard contains both Catholic and Protestant graves.



The Cross from Annagh Church now located at St Nicholas' Churchyard.

At some point after the Reformation – most likely around 1600 – the loss of Bruhenny Church in the village and the later enactment of the Penal Laws meant the Catholic congregation worshipped in the houses of Catholic gentry or at Mass Rocks. While the majority of people in the country remained Catholic, an underground church developed and the people sheltered and supported priests.

As the Penal Laws were relaxed in the 1800s we can speculate that the Catholic church congregation moved to a church at Annagh which was a smaller village three kilometers north of Churchtown village. Annagh was a centre for the booming flax industry in the late 1700s but flax production went into decline in the early 1800s as did Annagh village which is now in ruins.

Plans for the construction of the present church of St Nicholas began during the incumbency of Rev David O'Leary (1839-1859) and presumably halted during and until immediately after the Great Famine (1845-49). A letter from the parishioners to the Bishop of Cloyne in 1860 would indicate St Nicholas' Church was under construction at this time. It is likely that the new St Nicholas' was completed in the early 1860s and replaced a simpler and smaller thatched structure in the village which would have been used for many years after the former Catholic church at Annagh was demolished. It is believed that stone from the church at Annagh was used in the perimeter wall of the new church and, of course, the original Annagh Church Cross may still be seen in the grounds of St Nicholas' Church.

Catholic Parish Priests

This record of Catholic Parish Priests is reproduced largely from *The Annals of Churchtown* which was published in 2005 by the Churchtown Village Renewal Trust now succeeded by Churchtown Heritage Society. The original research was carried out by Denis J Hickey.

While our research is far from complete earliest ecclesiastical records from the Pipe Roll of Cloyne (Rotulus Pipae Clonensis) tell us that in 1291, more than 200 years before the Reformation began in the early 1500s, that “at Bruhenny Church, 100 yards east of the town, Robert Cheusner was presented to the vicarage by Odo de Barry”. Later John de Barry Clarke was presented by Thomas O’Holan who was appointed rector in 1311 and we find Vide Cahirultan in possession of the rectorship of Brothing (Bruhenny) in 1384. Reverend Donald O’Mongayn is recorded as the parish priest 1418. We have no further Roman Catholic records until 1704.

Even though the Reformation started in 1517 and Henry VIII declared himself Supreme Head of the Church in 1534 we can assume it would have taken many decades for Bruhenny Church to be taken over by the Church of Ireland. We could speculate that it must have happened during the Plantation of Munster, some years before 1600?

The next record of a Catholic Priest in Churchtown is that of Reverend Daniel Daly, listed as resident in Lisgriffin, who replaced Donald O’Mongayn in 1704. The year 1714 saw Reverend Maurice Brown as pastor. Reverend John O’Brien was Parish Priest from 1730 to 1750; he was known as *An Sagart Dubh* because of his dark complexion and he was a renowned Gaelic poet. He was succeeded by Reverend William Joyce, who, following his transfer to Ballyhea in 1761, was succeeded by Reverend Edward Dwyer.

Kilbrin-born Reverend Maurice Hallihan held the post from 1763 to 1767 and his successor was a Franciscan, Reverend Denis McAuliffe, who remained until 1775. Reverend Pierce Mansfield was incumbent in 1775-98. He is buried in the family plot at St James’ Church of Ireland, Mallow; strangely, the inscription on his tombstone reads, ‘9 years of Churchtown and Lisscarroll’, even though he was the incumbent for 13 years.

Reverend William Norris, who remained until 1812, succeeded Reverend Mansfield. In 1812, the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths was begun in the parish by the Reverend Daniel O’Brien. He remained for some 26 years. Reverend O’Brien and Sheriff Crofts prevented the houses in Churchtown village from being razed by Colonel Gough’s command from Buttevant during the ‘Burning’ of Churchtown in 1822 following the murder of four policemen in the RIC Barracks.

In 1837 Father O’Brien was replaced by Fr David O’Leary. Father O’Leary who would have been a driving force in the planning and development of St Nicholas’ Church died on 25th March 1859; a marble mural in St Mary’s Church, Buttevant, marks his burial place. Father O’Leary’s curate was Father Daniel Falvey. Father Falvey was transferred to Buttevant in 1841 and Father Patrick Purcell briefly replaced him. The next curate



The ruins of the original pre-Reformation church in Bruhenny graveyard

was Father Daniel Freeman, transferred from Killeagh in 1842. Father William Golden, who came as curate in 1843, died in Churchtown of 'Famine Fever' in 1847.

The Cork antiquary John Windele (1801-65) writing in 1851 noted that 'Churchtown has one of the few thatched chapels now in the diocese [of Cloyne]'. It is this reference and the letter below dated June 7th 1860 that leads us to believe that the current Church was in construction in 1860s.

During the curacy of Father David Sheahan (1838-62), parishioners petitioned the Bishop, Dr Keane, to be allowed a second Mass on Sundays because the (temporary) church was too small to accommodate the congregation for a single Mass. The petition read as follows:

The Right Revd Doctor Keane, Lord Bishop of Cloyne,

May it please your Lordship, We the undersigned parishioners of Churchtown are obliged most reluctantly to complain to your Lordship of the injustice done us in not giving us two Masses as was promised by your Lordship's predecessor the late Right Reverend Doctor Murphy (at least during the building of our new Chapel), and we most respectfully refer your Lordship to the Reverend D. Sheahan, our present curate, for the accuracy of this statement.

If your Lordship had an opportunity of seeing how we are circumstanced the male portion of us having to hear Mass in an open yard, while the females are crushed together in an adjoining room where there is no opportunity of knowing how the Holy Sacrifice is offered up, we feel satisfied your Lordship would require to have the two Masses given, which would remedy these grievances we complain of. Furthermore my Lord we consider when our new chapel will be built, we still have a just claim on having the Masses continued as this parish constitutes more than half the united Parishes of Churchtown and

Liscarroll in extent and population, and that we contribute two-thirds of the priests' income which makes us submit to your Lordship the reasonableness of our demand, more especially as ours are almost exclusively dairy farms varying from Twenty to Seventy cows from which cause it is quite impossible that our servants can hear Mass at all at the hour appointed, half past ten o'clock.

If the duty be considered too much for two Clergymen we most respectfully request your Lordship to send another curate as we intend for the future to Contribute to the Support of our Clergy only in proportion to the share of their Mission our parish receives. Hoping your Lordship will consider our request reasonable, we subscribe ourselves your Lordship's dutiful and dedicated servants.

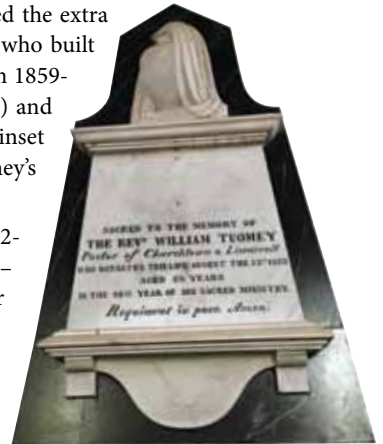
Churchtown, June 7th 1860

Signed by: Patrick Roche, P. Cowhey, John D. Cowhey, William Roche, Francis Cowhy, Michael O'Brien, William Thompson, William Connor, William Duane, Gerald Fitzgibbon, William Murphy, Nathaniel Simcox, Patrick Brown, Daniel Murphy, Patk. Callanan, John Coughlan, Maurice Sheehan, Garret Fleming, James Binchy, Michael Binchy, Callaghan Sullivan, James Roche, Martin Barry, John Cuillinugh, Thomas Cowhey, Michael O'Sullivan.

The petition was successful and the parish was allowed the extra Mass some little while later. Father William Tuomey, who built the present church in Liscarroll, was Parish Priest from 1859-1872 and had as curates Fr David Cashman (1862-67) and Fr Cornelius Cashman (from 1867). A marble tablet inset in the wall of St Nicholas' Church marks Father Tuomey's resting place.

Reverend Charles McCarthy was Parish Priest from 1872-1878; he saw three, possibly four, curates in the parish – Fr Cahill (to 1877), Fr Timothy Lenihan (1877-78), Fr Philip Colgan (1878) and Fr Savage (1878-84). Father McCarthy's family purchased lands near Granard for parish use. Father McCarthy built the parochial house on these lands and his frequent references to it as 'my castle' gave the name CastlemacCarthy both to it and the surrounding area. He is buried in Liscarroll Church.

Fr McCarthy was followed by Reverend James Barry as Parish Priest; he died in 1891 (the year in which a second curate was appointed and took up residency in the Liscarroll end of the parish). Father Barry's curates were Fr Savage (to 1884), Fr David Williams (1884-87), Fr Patrick Murphy (1887-89) and Fr Bartholomew O'Keeffe, DD (1889-91). Reverend Timothy O'Keeffe (1891-1901) was the next Parish Priest; his curate was Fr Michael Ellard. Reverend Eugene O'Connell – the pastor destined to



The plaque in St Nicholas' Church to Reverend William Tuomey.

have the briefest stewardship – arrived in July 1901 and left to take up parochial duties in Kanturk in September 1902.

The shortest reign was followed by the longest one – that of Father Pierce McSweeney. He was a keen gardener and was known for his spectacular show of antirrhinums each year. An elegant limestone cross marks his grave in St Nicholas' church grounds, inscribed with the words:

Erected by the people of Churchtown and Liscarroll in memory of their beloved pastor, the Very Reverend Pierce McSweeney, PP. He presided over them with gentleness and zeal for 23 years. Revered and mourned by his flock.



He died in 1923 in the 84th year of his age and 55th of his sacred ministry.

Father McSweeney's curate in 1911, according to the Census of that year, was Reverend Michael Whelan, who had succeeded Father Eugene McCarthy in 1904. Father Daniel Foley, who became Parish Priest in March 1925, had as curate Fr James Roche (who was to return as Parish Priest in the 1940s). Father Foley was born in Coolcaum, a first cousin of the Irish nationalist and Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix (1864-1963). For many years, Father Foley was driven on his priestly duties by his jarvey, Gerry, and when the latter died the priest used a fixed-wheel Raleigh bicycle. A diminutive figure, Father Foley possessed a fine singing voice. On his visits to the school, he conducted the children as they sang and he usually obliged with two of his favourites – 'Annie Laurie' and 'The Bonny, Bonny, Banks of Loch Lomond'.

Father Foley was a relative of Tom O'Brien, owner of a village Pub and shop. On several occasions, Father Foley's enthusiasm for music led, according to ex-pupil John Browne, to the pupils leaving school as late as six o'clock. In his role as patron of North Cork GAA, Father Foley frequently threw in the ball at the commencement of hurling matches. He was buried in Liscarroll on 27th March 1945 and his Month's Mind was held in the schoolhouse

in Churchtown, now the Community Centre. Father Foley's successor was his former curate, Father James Roche.



Altar servers in the 1940s with the Sacristan Katie McCarthy and Father James Savage, CC. Servers: (back l-r) Billy O'Keeffe and Jimmy Bowe. Front: Denis Pat Costelloe and Denis J. Hickey.



The Marble Altar at St Nicholas' Church.

Father Roche was fortunate to have as his curate Father Martin Cusack. Father Cusack was a wonderful singer and during his time in Churchtown he encouraged the formation of the Churchtown Dramatic Society, through whose efforts much-needed repairs to the roof of the church were largely financed. Father Roche, in one of his last parochial duties, officiated at the opening of the new school in 1947.

Father James Cotter was the next Parish Priest (1947-53). He had at one time been chaplain to the British troops in Ballyvonaire. He drove a black car, with registration number ZB 2494, and he would alert the village to his approach by sounding the horn twice as he came to Hickey's Hill (also called Kerry Lane). Fr Cotter is remembered as a lovely easy-going man.

In the very late 1940s (possibly), a contractor removed the entire old slating on the church roof – known as 'kings' and 'queens'— and replaced them with modern slates. The original church slates now roof a well-known castle in County Cork. In later years, Ned Dorney carried out roof and other major maintenance repairs on St Nicholas' Church.

Father Cotter threw the switch that officially brought electric power to the village in 1949. Altar boys enjoyed serving Mass for him. Fr Cotter was followed by Fr James J Savage. Father Savage acquired a horse named 'George' which he rode to sick calls and to the stations. 'George' was stabled at the rear of his house. Father Savage then graduated to a motor bike on which he – and the frightened Altar boy – had some near death experiences en route to the Stations!

Father Savage had a wonderful singing voice and was always a popular turn at the Dramatic Society's concerts. A talented preacher, he was much in demand at surrounding churches and at retreats. Father Savage was the last to reside at the curate's house in Churchtown village. The property was later acquired by the Gaffney family.

Reverend Philip Mortell was Parish Priest from 1953-62, followed by Dr Matthew Twomey from 1962 until his retirement to Kanturk in 1977. Reverend Daniel J. O'Callaghan ministered from 1977-84 and he was followed by Reverend Donal O'Driscoll, who remained until 1985. Historian and author, Reverend Patrick J. Twohig, was Parish Priest from 1985-2001.

Coachford-born Reverend Stephen O'Mahony, was appointed Parish priest in 2001. His first curate was Fr Stephen Cummins, who was succeeded in 2003 by Fr Tom McDermott, a native of Charleville. Fr Tom was transferred to Inniscarra in 2013 and Fr Stephen O'Mahony retired. At the same time the Diocese decided not to appoint a Curate and so Cloyne born Fr Robin Morrissey was appointed Parish Priest of Churchtown and Liscarroll in 2013.

Catholic Parish Priests of Churchtown

Name	Years	Further details
Donald O'Moygayn	1418 -	
Daniel Daly	1704 -	Resident in Lisgriffin
Maurice Brown	1714 -	
John O'Brien	1730 - 1750	Buried at Carrigdownane
William Joyce	1750 - 1761	Transferred to Ballyhea
Edward Dwyer	1761 - 1763	
Maurice Hallihan	1763 - 1767	Buried at Kilbrin
Denis McAuliffe, OFM	1767 - 1775	
Pierce Mansfield	1775 - 1798	Buried at St James' in Mallow
William Norris	1798 - 1812	
Daniel O'Brien	1812 - 1838	Buried at Kilgrogan
David O'Leary	1838 - 1859	Buried at Buttevant on 25th March
William Twomey	1859 - 1872	Buried Churchtown on 12th August
Charles McCarthy	1872 - 1878	Buried Liscarroll on 10th April
James Barry	1878 - 1891	Buried Liscarroll on 25th December
Timothy O'Keeffe	1891 - 1901	Buried Liscarroll on 9th June
Eugene B. O'Connell	1901 - 1902	Transferred to Kanturk
Pierce McSweeney	1902 - 1925	Buried Churchtown on 28th February
Daniel Foley	1925 - 1945	Buried Liscarroll on 27th March
John Roche	1945 - 1947	Transferred to Newmarket
James Cotter	1947 - 1953	Transferred to Kildorrery
Philip Mortell	1953 - 1962	Transferred to Newtownshandrum
Matthew Twomey, DD	1962 - 1977	Retired. Died 1987. Buried at Ballyvourney
Daniel J. O'Callaghan	1977 - 1984	Retired 1984 to Nazareth Home
Donal D. O'Driscoll	1984 - 1985	Transferred to Cloyne
Patrick J. Twohig	1985 - 2001	Retired
Stephen O'Mahony	2001 - 2013	Retired
Robin Morrissey	2013 -	

Granard Church

Interestingly, Granard, a townland placed in Churchtown by Moland in his 1702 survey, now forms part of Liscarroll but in ancient times Granard was a parish in its own right with a Church and Graveyard. Both Catholics and Protestants are buried in this ancient spot. Granard Gaels is a most appropriate name for the combined Churchtown and Liscarroll Juvenile GAA Club.

Griffith's Valuation

The total area of the church grounds is given in Griffith's Valuation (1851) as 1 rood and 8 perches, and places a nominal rent of £10 10s 0d upon it (the church, school and cemetery were exempt from rents). Griffith's Valuation was carried out ten years before St Nicholas' was built and so these grounds would have been where the thatched Church was located possibly in the same location as the current Church.

St Nicholas' Church Choir

Churchtown choir was widely recognised as an excellent choral group. During the 1940s, it comprised of both adults and children. Nora O'Keeffe was the accompanist on the harmonium. In the 1950s, the choir consisted almost entirely of schoolchildren, who were accompanied on the harmonium by their teacher, Margaret Wall. Since Vatican II, a choir has supported the liturgy in St Nicholas' Church. Organists included Ellie Mary O'Keeffe and in recent years Rosario Buckley and Louise Roche.

St Nicholas' Sacristans

Sacristans associated with the church included Kate McCarthy, who lost her 25 year-old son Michael during the First World War. Devoted to her work, Kate's apparent omnipresence in the church was legendary; on one occasion the Diocesan Examiner, seeking confirmation of our Lord's Perpetual Presence in the Tabernacle, asked a local pupil, 'Who never leaves the church?' Quick as a flash came the answer, 'Katie Carthy, Father'. Kate was the recipient of the Benemerenti medal from the Vatican for over 40 years' devoted service. Hannie 'Booney' O'Sullivan followed her in the post of Sacristan. 'Birdie' Flynn followed Hannie and she was succeeded, in turn, by Bridget Flynn, Nan Fisher and Eileen Scott. The Sacristan in 2005 was Julia Coleman. The sacristan in 2017 was Patricia Crowley.



Katie McCarthy, Sacristan of St Nicholas' Catholic Church c.1948.



Birdie Flynn, Sacristan, at the 'old' altar at St Nicholas' Church.

St Nicholas' Church Artifacts



The Stations of the Cross

The marble Holy Water font in the porch of the church was the gift of Mr and Mrs David Creedon of Ballynaboul; the Baptismal font was donated jointly by John Flannery, Churchtown, and the world famous race horse trainer Vincent O'Brien, Clashganniv House; the Stations of the Cross were the gift of Dr Mary Cowhey of Churchtown House. The Confession boxes were replaced in the late 1940s with a pair manufactured by local carpenter, Paddy Flynn. Patrick 'Condy' O'Mahony regularly repainted the statues in the church up to the 1940s.



Above: the Holy Water Font and below: the Baptismal Font.

St Nicholas' Gong

As stated earlier the Creedon family proved generous benefactors to St Nicholas'. They donated the beautiful marble Holy Water Font in current use and in 1895 another member



of the family in Liverpool presented a Sanctuary Gong which was accepted on behalf of the parish by Rev Fr Timothy O'Keefe, PP. On 7th December 2014 the gong was returned from Knock Basilica where it had reposed for some thirty years. The gong's return was organised through the Churchtown Heritage Society which also had it re-lacquered and polished by Noel Power. During his Homily Fr. Robin Morrissey PP welcomed

Mary Stokes O'Brien a direct descendant of the Creedon line, and Noel Power, to the church. Churchtown's Choir again excelled and many remarked on the poignancy of the moment the Gong was borne to the altar as 'Faith of Our Fathers' reverberated through the ancient beams. Afterwards refreshments were served in the Booney House.



One of the two Confessionals in St Nicholas' manufactured by local carpenter Paddy Flynn.



St Nicholas' on National TV

On April 3rd 2011 Fr Tom McDermott celebrated Mass live from Churchtown broadcasting to a large audience of viewers around Ireland and on the internet from RTE 1, with a special focus on Trocaire's Lenten Campaign. Fr Tom was reported at the time in The Corkman as follows: "It's great for our village in Churchtown to be able to support Trocaire's Lenten Campaign through this Mass on Sunday. I've seen the work Trocaire does first hand and how vital it is for the families and communities supported by Trocaire. It is great to see the parish of Churchtown-Liscarroll coming together as a community to support Trocaire's important, lifesaving work and to remember the people in the developing world who need our support"

The Mass Rock

The Penal Laws attempted to control the activities of Catholic priests through the issue of a licence. The law prohibited both the saying and the hearing of Mass offered by 'unlicensed' priests. Many clerics, unwilling to compromise their priestly vows, refused to register and went 'on the run'. In an effort to circumvent the law, Mass was celebrated at secret locations on a specially blessed portable slab of rock.

Various stratagems were adopted to ensure that the Mass site was not divulged to the authorities, the most common being the seemingly innocuous query to a fellow Catholic, 'Were you at the Rock, and did you see my love there?' If the answer was 'Yes' to both queries, it was safe to proceed there to hear Mass. If, however, the answer was 'No' to the second part of the question, it meant that the authorities had discovered the location. The old Irish song, An raibh Tú ag an gCarraig? ('Were you at the Rock?') relates such an event. A Mass Rock is preserved in the Garden Field of Guiney's in the townland of Clashelane.

The Mass Walk

The 'Mass walk' was an established right of way through the fields that was used by country people on their way to and from Mass (it also tended to be used by schoolchildren on their way to and from school). Two of the most widely used Mass paths in the parish were the one from Clashelane which ran through Páirc na Locha via the quarries to Carrigeen na gCat and exited at Ballyadam; and the one from Walshestown which brought the walker through Leap, the Bog Field and through an oak screen before negotiating a stile at the corner of Beechinor's Field and continuing



The Church Window in St Colman's Cathedral dedicated to St Nicholas; the patron saint of the parish of Churchtown and Liscarroll.

across the Well Field (formerly an orchard and subsequently renamed Peter's Paddock), along the Lower Walk and exiting close to Burton Lodge gate, before continuing along the Burton Road to St Nicholas' Church.

St Nicholas' Technical Specifications

Saint Nicholas' Church in Churchtown is a freestanding gable-fronted church having a four-bay nave elevation, one-bay chancel to west, and Priest's entrance porch and sacristy to the southern elevation. The roof is pitched artificial slate with ashlar limestone bellcote having cast-iron bell and cut limestone cross finial, and cast-iron rainwater goods.

Snecked roughly-dressed limestone walls, with stepped cut and rubble stone plinth, and with tooled cut stone buttresses to corners of church proper. Carved limestone holy water stoups to gable-front. Roughcast rendered walls to chancel and smooth rendered walls to sacristy extension. Pointed arch openings with chamfered stone surrounds, having leaded stained glass to windows. The east window is five-light.

The main entrance in gable-front with a cut-stone order arch with dressed stone voussoirs, cut-stone hood-moulding, and double-leaf timber battened doors with decorative cast-iron strap hinges. There is a flight of limestone steps to entrance. Tudor-arched door opening to porch with cut-stone surround and timber battened door with step. Pointed window flanking porch door has latticed window. Marble reredos, altar, rails and baptismal font to interior. Gallery over entrance end of nave. Arch-braced timber A-framed roof, arch feet being borne on limestone corbels. Graveyard to side. Snecked tooled limestone boundary walls and piers with decorative cast-iron railings, double-leaf and pedestrian gates to site.

The elevations of St Nicholas' church are greatly enlivened by its rich limestone construction, contrasted with the ashlar limestone bellcote, window surrounds and quoins. Its arch-braced roof is typical of churches of the period and the marble altar furniture are of artistic interest, as are the fine carved stoups to the gable-front. Situated in a small graveyard on a slightly elevated site in the landscape, the character of this church and its surroundings has changed little since the mid-nineteenth century. It forms a pleasing focal feature in the local community.

These technical specifications are reproduced from the book, *An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of North Cork* (2009), ISBN 9781406421767.



One of two inset carved limestone water fonts left and right of the entrance arch to St Nicholas' Church.





Above: the shrine at St Brigid's Well at Mountbrigid and, right, St Brigid's Shrine in St Nicholas' Church



St Brigid's Well

St Brigid's Well in the townland of Mountbrigid in Churchtown is the scene of an annual pilgrimage on 1st February, the Feast Day of Brigid, Patroness of Ireland. It has been suggested, however, that both the well and surrounding townland are actually dedicated to another Brigid, sister of St Colman, Patron of the Diocese of Cloyne. Our local St Brigid is believed to have been born at Ardskeagh in Ballyhea and her Feast Day is actually on 6th March. Her brother, Colman, who was converted by St Brendan in about 570 AD, had a monastery at Kilmaclenine (Cill Mac Lenin or 'church of the son of Lenin'), also in Ballyhea, the ruins of which are still extant. According to the Book of Munster, Mac Lenin (born c. 522) of Kilmaclenine was a bard baptised by St Brendan, who christened him Colman. Colman went on to found the Church of Cloyne.

The ancient ash tree that stood by St Brigid's Well, known as Biddy's Tree, was brought down by a severe storm in January 1973. No effort has been spared by the parish's local committee in providing ease of access for the many that pause for prayer at this ancient site.



Bruhenny Church of Ireland

History and Vicars

This record of Church of Ireland vicars is based on Albert Daly's article in *The Annals of Churchtown* (pages 448 – 451).

In 1545, James Roche settled as vicar in Bruhenny and in 1591 Lucas Brady, son and heir of Hugh Brady, Bishop of Meath, held the office. James may have been a Roman Catholic but it is certain that Lucas Brady was a Protestant. Lucas died in 1612 and William Holiday was installed on 16th January 1610. In 1615 John Hull became Vicar of Wallstown, Templeroan and Ballintemple (also known as Churchtown). He was later Precentor and in 1637 became Rector of Schull in West Cork. In about 1634, James Barry appears as Impropiator of the rectory of Bruhenny. Reverend Pakington was at Bruhenny for some time before his appointment as Archdeacon of Cork in 1662. Then in 1662 John Veacy came and was admitted on 24th September 1663 to be Rector of Bruhenny, Shandrum, Aglisdrinagh and Rathgoggan. He was Dean of Cork in 1667. On 29th October 1668, Christopher Vowell was presented by Philippa Perceval and the parishes of Ballyhea and Bruhenny were united.

In 1700, Kerry Fitzmaurice took over at Bruhenny, having been presented by Johnis Perceval Baronetti. Much change occurred about this time – and not all for the better. There was, for example, a drastic decision to build a new church in Maryfield and leave the beautiful old Bruhenny building. A wiser decision was made by Sir John Perceval to found a charitable institution at Burton Park, of £42 per annum.

In 1713, a presentation of Limerick silver, patten, chalice and flagon was made to Sir John. The inscription reads: Ex dono viri honorabilis Johannis Perceval equitas aurati in usum Roclesiae Parochialis de Browheny. In 1710, an Act of Parliament sanctioned a change to a new site and in 1715 the new church was consecrated in the townland of Maryfield, a quarter of a mile to the west of the village. It was connected to Burton House by a beech-lined avenue and a two-arched stone bridge, which is still standing in the beautiful parklands of Burton Park.

The beautiful old church of Bruhenny was left to fall into ruins as a new era commenced. The new church building was approximately 60 feet long and 30 feet wide. Strangely, its foundation stone, which was embedded in the west wall inside, reads: Cumf Beat v SPS Deo Opt Max Anno 1792 Domus Orationis . It is likely that the new church was built at different stages in the shape of a cross with a square tower. The foundation stone may still be seen at St John's in Buttevant, to which place it was removed for safe-keeping.

In 1712, Reverend Kerry Fitzmorris served at the parishes of Liscarroll, Buttevant and Bregogue, as well as Bruhenny. Bregogue had a little church on the north-western end adjoining the townland of Tullig; its cemetery is in Tullig, near the wall of Tubbera Tadg. Reverend Kerry, whose father Ulysses Fitzmorris was a member of the Landsdowne family of County Kerry, kept all these parishes until he died in 1728.

Downs Conroy arrived in 'Brohenny' on 18th March 1728. His place as rector was taken in 1735 by Robert Brereton from County Carlow (his mother Catherine was a daughter of George Perceval and Mary Crofton). Kilbrin was added to his care in 1742 and he left Bruhenny in 1764. Incidentally, the gargoyle or stone head built into the right pier at Kilbrin is from the old church, which stood inside the south-west entrance.

Charles Perceval took over on 7th June 1764 as Rector of Bruhenny on presentation of John, Earl of Egmont, and obtained a lease from the Dean of Cloyne of Kilbrogan (possibly Kilgrogan?) at £3 yearly. The lease was renewed in 1780 for £1 10s per annum.

In 1774 Bruhenny Church was in ruins and the glebe lands abandoned, amounting to 11 acres, 1 rood and 35 perches. The new glebe lands at Maryfield measured 3 acres and 34 perches. In 1780, Charles Perceval became curate; he died in 1795. Reverend Matthew Purcell, second son of Sir John Purcell of High Fort, then took the parish (which had a curate's salary of £69 4s 71/d). However, the number of Anglican parishioners was dwindling fast – in 1805, just one family remained. The new church could hold 300 people, but it never had a congregation in excess of 45.

Reverend Matthew Purcell died in 1845 and was interred at Maryfield. In 1860, Maryfield Church was in good order and the Reverend Matthew Tierney held services every Sunday and on the chief Feast Days, while the Sacraments were taken monthly by the congregation of 27. Reverend Matthew Tierney resigned in 1872 and went to a parish in or near Bristol. He is believed to have been the last Vicar of Maryfield, Churchtown.



The sacred vessels from Maryfield Church, now in St James' Mallow.

Maryfield church which survived only 179 years old had an unusual history. Construction commenced in 1715 and it was built in several stages until it finally acquired its cruciform shape. With tower and chancel later added, the church was not finally dedicated until 1792. The dedication stone was embedded inside the west wall and is today retained at St Johns' in Buttevant, with which Bruhenny was later amalgamated. Translated, the Latin inscription on the stone reads: 'Together with the Blessed Son and Holy Spirit this House of prayer was dedicated to the best and Greatest God in the year 1792.'

In 1834, the square tower was damaged and repaired in 1837 at a cost of £250. The tower was, however, demolished in 1894. The stone from Maryfield was sold to a road contractor and the beech trees were felled; the monies raised were used to repair the wall around Bruhenny's old church.

Maryfield is the resting place not only of Lady O'Connell, married to a descendant of Daniel O'Connell, 'The Liberator', but also of many outstanding people of Churchtown.

Church of Ireland Vicars in Churchtown

Name	Years
James Roche (possibly RC?)	1545 -
Lucas Brady	1591 -
William Holiday	1610 -
John Hull	1615 -
James Barry	1634 -
Rev Pakington	Date unknown
John Veacy	1662 -
Christopher Vowell	1668 -
Kerry Fitzmaurice	1700 -
Downs Conroy	1728 -
Robert Brereton	1735 -
Charles Perceval	1764 -
John Purcell	1795 -
Matthew Purcell	-1845
Matthew Tierney	1860 - 1872



*Above: Bishop Berkeley and,
below, Jonathan Swift*



Famous Visitors

The world renowned Bishop George Berkeley, Church of Ireland Bishop of Cloyne during 1734-52, after whom Berkeley University in California is named was an important early visitor to Burton Park. The metaphysical philosopher-bishop was chaplain and friend to Sir John Perceval and was also tutor to his son. During his sojourns at Burton, Berkeley enjoyed long walks through its wooded demesne, while his summer nights were spent on a hammock strung in the barn. Extracts from the correspondence between Berkeley and Perceval (Ryan-Purcell papers) reveal the special affection the bishop reserved for Burton. See page 59 in *The Annals*. Albert Daly in his *Church of Ireland history of Bruhenny* reports that the famous writer and clergyman Jonathan Swift also visited Burton.

Churches in Churchtown

Burton Park Chapel: there is a small private chapel in the main house which was used by generations of the Purcell family. This Church was approved by the Vatican as a place where Sunday Mass observance could be fulfilled. This Chapel includes wall memorials to members of the Purcell family who died in the Great War and thereafter.



The private Chapel at Burton Park.

Bruhenny Church: the ruins of the old pre-Reformation Church in Bruhenny graveyard in the village are still standing.

This would have originally been a Church of Rome and listed in Papal Taxation documentation dated 1291. Bruhenny Church was in ruins in 1615 and abandoned by 1694 when a new Protestant church was planned.

Kilgrogan: Cill Grogan or 'Church of Grogan'. Kilgrogan is listed as both a parish and a townland within the Churchtown District Electoral Division. The townland encloses a cemetery occupying one-third of an acre. Within the cemetery, which is surrounded by a two-foot thick limestone wall, the outline of an old church or monastery (or both) may still be traced through its remaining stone. The building is measured as 30 feet by 24 feet. Tradition has it that in olden times the monks here worked in close harmony with the monks of Killabraher; and Killabraher is clearly visible on a hill to the northwest. Killabraher translates as Church (Cill) of the Brothers (Bráthair).

Maryfield Church: this new Church of Ireland which was created by an Act of Parliament in 1710 sanctioning the building of a church at 'Maryland' was located in a townland a quarter of a mile to the west of Churchtown village. Today, the site of this church is located at the south-eastern end of the GAA grounds. The building was consecrated in 1715 and was called Maryfield Church, capable of accommodating a congregation of 300 people.



The Cillín memorial at Mountribrigid.

Páircín na Cille: as the translation reveals is "little field of the church" at Mountbrigid. This was also an alternative burial grounds used in bygone days as a result of Church rules not allowing burial of unbaptised infants in consecrated graveyards. Cillín burial grounds were also used to bury adults, notably unidentified bodies and suicides, and were also used in times of famine, particularly during the Great Famine. There are a number of Cillíns in Churchtown including one at Leap.

References

The Annals of Churchtown, (2005), published by Churchtown Village Renewal Trust (now succeeded by Churchtown Heritage Society). ISBN 978-0-9524931-3-6. Compiled by Denis J. Hickey. Other contributors include: Caroline Hennessy, Colette Moloney, Jim McCarthy, Noel Linehan, Albert Daly, Gerry Murphy, Niamh Murphy, Brigid (Manning) O'Sullivan and Denis Pat Costelloe. 767pp.

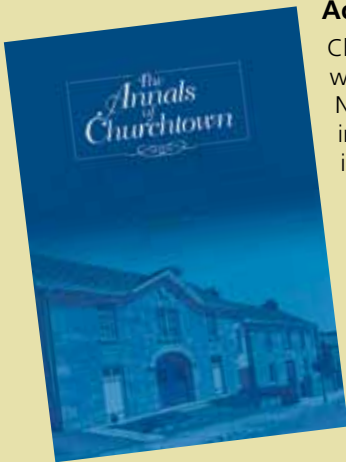
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Historical and Topographical Notes on Buttevant, Castletownroche, Doneraile, Mallow, and Places in their Vicinity; (1908), Colonel Grove White.

Acknowledgment

Churchtown Heritage Society acknowledges the great work of Denis J Hickey supported by Gerry Murphy and Noel Linehan who produced *The Annals of Churchtown* in 2005 after seven years work (1998-2005) and which is an invaluable asset in terms of recording our parish heritage and history for current and future generations. *The Annals* includes 12 historical essays, a chronology, 300 pages of Churchtown-related dictionary entries, 80 pages of tables including various census, Griffith's Valuation and Tithe Applotment for Churchtown, a comprehensive glossary of Churchtown terms and expressions presented as *Lingua Bruhenny* and a full list of all 114 listed ancient monuments in Churchtown.



Caveat: While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material in this booklet more research needs to be carried out to verify what is reproduced and accumulate further information. Some Church related detail in *The Annals of Churchtown* is updated in this booklet.



St Nicholas' Church in December 2000.

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